

Keep your Child Away from Lead

Lead Tipsheet #5



Here are 4 things you can do to keep your child away from lead. If you know that you have lead paint in your home or you think you might, use this tipsheet to help keep your children away from lead.

Toddlers at ages 1 and 2 are more likely to be around lead. They can get lead dust or lead paint chips into their bodies because they often put their hands, toys or other things in their mouths. They also play where lead dust may be—like on floors and near window sills.

1 Keep Play Areas Clean

Think about all the places in your home where your child plays.

- See if there is peeling or chipping paint. Pick up any paint chips and throw them away.
- Wash the floor or vacuum the carpet often (use a HEPA vacuum).
- Put furniture in front of window sills with chipping paint so your child can't get to them.
- If you live in an apartment, don't let children play in the hall, stairs or on the porch.

2 Wash up Dust

A little bit of lead dust can easily spread over your entire house or apartment. Frequent cleaning using wet mops and rags can help reduce the amount of lead dust in your home.

- Wash window sills, trim around windows and doors and other areas children touch.
- Wash floors once a week.
- Go to the homeowners' section at maine.gov/healthyhomes for more information.

3 Test Your Child for Lead

Talk to your child's doctor about a blood lead test for your child.

- 1- and 2-year-olds should have a blood lead test. MaineCare requires it.
- If your child's blood lead test comes back high, your child will need other lead tests to make sure the lead is leaving the body.
- Make sure you go to all the appointments with your child's doctor.
- Go to the parents' section at maine.gov/healthyhomes for more information.

4 Keep Lead Out of your Child's Mouth

- Wash hands before eating and sleeping.
- Wash toys weekly.
- Don't let children eat food or use pacifiers that have fallen on the floor.
- Feed children at a clean table or in a high chair.

Protect your family.

- Check this website: maine.gov/healthyhomes
- Call for advice: **866-292-3474** • TTY: **Call Maine Relay 711**





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The most common cause of childhood lead poisoning in Maine is dust from lead paint.

Each year more than 100 of Maine's children are poisoned by lead. Lead dust collects on floors and other surfaces where children put their hands and play with toys. Children, especially those under 3, often put their hands and toys into their mouths. This makes it very easy for lead dust to get into, and damage, their growing bodies.

Lead Dust from Lead Paint

As leaded paint gets old and breaks down, lead dust can build up on window sills and floors in your house. This lead dust can remain in your home for a long time. Areas where lead paint rubs, such as door frames, windows, or even floors where you walk, can produce lead dust.

Lead dust can also come from home repairs and renovations. If you sand, scrape or disturb lead paint you can make lead dust. If you work on someone else's house that has lead paint, you can bring that lead dust into your home and car. Each time you bring lead dust home, more lead is in your house.

Lead from Other Sources

Lead paint is the most common source of lead poisoning. Sometimes, other sources of lead can be important.

Soil, especially next to old buildings. If lead paint was used on the outside of a building, lead chips or lead dust may be in the soil near the building. This can cause lead poisoning as some children get dirt on their hands, and then into their mouths. Have your children play on the grass or in a sandbox and keep them away from bare soil or dirt piles. Use a door mat to keep lead dust out of the house. See Tipsheet 4, **Testing my Home for Lead**, to learn how to test soil.

Hobbies. Some hobbies expose you to lead. Examples are: making stained glass, casting lead fishing sinkers, making your own ammunition (reloading) or refinishing furniture. If your hobby exposes you to lead, use special hobby clothes and wash them separately, wash your hands with soap and keep your children away from these activities.

Antiques or old painted furniture and toys. Any paint used before 1978 could contain lead. Paint made before 1950 contains the most lead. Make sure any antiques or painted old toys are in good condition (no chipping or peeling paint) and keep them out of reach of children.

Water. Lead from brass, lead solder or lead pipes can dissolve in some water. Drink from the cold water tap and run the water for awhile before filling your glass. If you have your own well, test your water - see wellwater.maine.gov to learn how.

Toys & Other Products. It is rare that a child is hurt by lead in toys. You can check cpsc.gov to learn about toy and product recalls. Some folk or herbal remedies also contain lead. Don't give your children supplements unless your doctor tells you to.

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Testing My Home for Lead

Lead Tipsheet #4



There are several ways to test your home for lead.

Some ways to test for lead are better than others. Each method differs in cost, time and accuracy. Most children are lead poisoned from dust created by lead paint. That is why it is important to test paint and dust for lead if you live in a home built before 1950.

Paint and Dust

There are several ways to test paint and dust for lead. Each method has good and bad points.

Home Test Kits

You can use home test kits that you buy at a hardware store to test for lead paint. These tests only tell you if there is lead on the surface. They will not tell you if there is lead paint **covered** by a layer of non-lead paint. They are most useful for testing painted wood that is already chipped or damaged. Home test kits are not expensive.

Lead Dust Wipes

Lead dust is the most common way children are poisoned in Maine. You can test for lead dust on floors and window sills in your own home or hire a lead expert to do it for you. You can get a lead dust test kit from the Maine State Lab at 287-8014. Knowing if you have lead dust around window sills or floors can help keep your children safe from lead.

Lead Experts

You can hire a lead expert to test your home. They have equipment that allows them to measure lead in paint, even if it is covered by layers of newer non-lead paint. They can test the whole home or selected rooms. While this option costs the most, it will also tell you the most about your home. You can get a list of lead testing at 287-2651 or in the homeowners section at maine.gov/healthyhomes.

Soil or Water

In Maine, soil and water don't often cause lead poisoning. But there are times when it may be a good idea to test soil or water for lead.

Testing your Soil for Lead

If you have a house built before 1950, you should assume there is lead in the soil right next to the house. Don't plant vegetables within 10 feet of the house or let your children play there.

If your children play in the dirt or if they often put soil in their mouths, test the soil for lead. You can get a kit to from the Maine State Lab at 287-8014 or University of Maine Extension at 581-3591.

Testing your Water for Lead

Lead in water comes from the pipes. If your water is corrosive it can dissolve lead solder in the copper pipes.

If your water comes from a public water supply you can call your water company to find out their last test results or to find out how to test your water.

If your water comes from a private well, you can test it for lead and other problems. Test your well water for lead if you have a young child or if you notice green staining where your water drips (like the bathtub or sink). Learn how to test your well water at: wellwater.maine.gov or by calling 866-292-3474 (toll-free in Maine).

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How to Clean Up Lead Dust

Lead Tipsheet #2



While lead paint can be found in houses and buildings built before 1978, most lead paint is found in homes built before 1950. Lead paint that is peeling or chipping can be a hazard. Areas where lead paint rubs, such as door frames, windows, or even floors where you walk, can produce lead dust. Lead dust can also come from home repairs and renovations. If you sand, scrape or disturb lead paint you can make lead dust.

If You Live in an Old Building or Have Sanded or Scraped Lead Paint

Follow these directions to give your home a deep cleaning to remove lead dust. Once you have cleaned in this way, clean your floors, windowsills, door trim and baseboards with a damp rag or mop once a week.

Step 1: Prepare before you clean.

Look around the room. Put on gloves and pick up any paint chips on the floor or around windows. A damp rag, paper towel or baby wipe may help you pick up these pieces. Throw away the chips and dirty rags in a plastic bag. Vacuum the floor - vacuums with HEPA filters work best. "Allergen" vacuum bags are the next best choice if you don't have a HEPA vacuum. Do not use a broom as these will spread lead dust around.



Step 2: Mix your wash water.

Fill a wash bucket half full with warm water. Mix in a household detergent, following the directions on the bottle.



Step 3: Wash the woodwork and floors.

Start by washing the woodwork around windows, doors and baseboards with rags wet with the wash water. Be sure to work from top to bottom. Once a rag is dirty, throw it out. Change the water when it becomes dirty. Dump dirty water into the toilet.



Step 4: Wash the floors.

Using a new mixture of wash water, wash the floors with a mop or clean rags. When finished, discard wash rags and dump the dirty water into the toilet.

Step 5: Rinse and clean up.

Fill a clean bucket with water. Dip clean rags into the water and wipe all the woodwork that you washed. Using new rinse water, mop or wipe the floors. When you are finished, dump the rinse water into the toilet and clean the mop and bucket. Throw away your gloves, rags, and place the garbage bag in the trash.



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